### "They Just Keep Dropping Out"

What's working to increase American Indian student graduates?

Sandra Boham, Great Falls Public Schools Dulce Whitford, Billings Public Schools

# It's all about relationships!

Changing the Culture and Climate of the schools



School-level factors associated with dropping out.

- olarge schools,
- oa perceived lack of empathy among teachers, passive teaching methods,
- o irrelevant curriculum,
- inappropriate testing,
- otracking,
- lack of parent involvement

"The Dropout/Graduation Rate Crisis Among American Indian and Alaska Native Students Faircloth and Tippeconnic, 2010"





### Student level factors, specific to American Indian and Alaska Native students

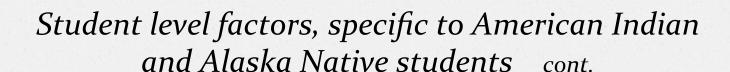
- ofeeling unwanted or "pushed out" of school
- opoor quality of student-teacher relationships
- olack of parental support
- opeer pressure
- oboredom,
- Problems with other students,
- odiscipline problems
- odifficulty with classes and with reading





### Student level factors, specific to American Indian and Alaska Native students cont.

- oresponsibilities at home or on the job
- Pregnancy
- opoor attendance
- olack of future plans or goals
- oretention in grade
- Student mobility/transiency
- olegal problems
- olack of adequate transportation



- omedical reasons
- high rates of suspension and expulsion
- otransferring from one school to another
- ospending more than three hours alone at home per day
- ochild care



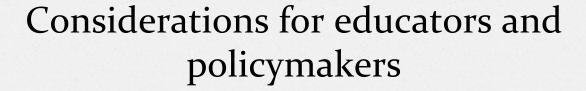
#### **Great Falls Public Schools**

- ✓ Diversity/Culturally Responsive Leadership, Teaching and Schools to
- improve School Climate
- ✓ Summer Academic Culture Camp
- √Home to School Coordinators
- ✓ Home Visits
- ✓ Indian Clubs
- ✓ Student Drumming/Singing, Dance Groups and Pow Wow
- ✓ Academic Achievement Coach
- ✓ Teacher Training: Native American Studies Culturally Responsive Standards Based Teaching

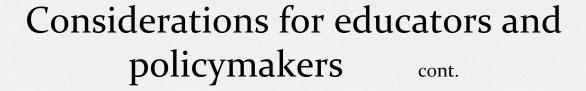
#### **Billings Public Schools**

- ✓ Increase Title VII Staff to be more effective in schools
- ✓ Indian Clubs
- Step Up To Success (8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade)
- ✓ American Indian Summer Camp K-6
- ✓ American Indian High School 101 (Incoming AI Freshman)
- ✓ So much more

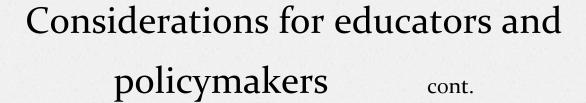
## Strategies to Decrease Dropout Rates and Improve Graduation Rates



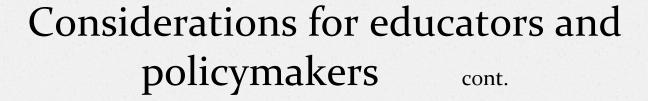
- Review and revise school policies and avoid implementation of policies that exclude, repress, demean, embarrass, harass or alienate Native students
- Make schools physically, mentally and emotionally safe by working to end racism, sexual harassment and other forms of physical and emotional assault



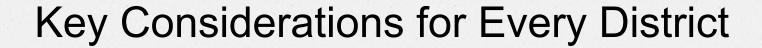
- Demonstrate an ethic of care and concern for students
- Hold high expectations for students and challenge them to succeed
- Avoid use of negative stereotypes
- Recognize that not all students perform or achieve the same
- Avoid blaming students or their parents and families for their academic failure or the low performance of the school



- Actively involve parents and families in schools and communities
- Individualize instruction and work to actively engage students in the learning process
- Provide opportunities for students to be immersed in their Native language and culture and develop and implement culturally appropriate and relevant curricula



- Prepare educators to work with American Indian and Alaska Native students
- Ouse tests and assessments as a means of supporting and assisting students rather than a means of promoting failure



Know your community

•Be Prepared for change

Address ownership and leadership

### To Know Your Culture is To Know Yourself

Cultural and Academic Highlights- Senior High School 2010-2011

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZ3Zg4MFOdE

### Questions......